

# ***HARPSWELL BULLETIN***

**News for Harpswell Residents and Property Owners from the Town Office – January 2005**

**Town Website: [www.harpswell.maine.gov](http://www.harpswell.maine.gov)**

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE** **PUBLIC HEARING**

DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2005  
LOCATION: HARPSWELL ISLANDS SCHOOL  
TIME: 7 P.M.

## **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2005  
LOCATION: HARPSWELL ISLANDS SCHOOL  
TIME: 9:30 A.M.- Comp. Plan Article Discussion

This issue of the Harpswell Bulletin is designed to inform all Harpswell residents and taxpayers that Harpswell's Comprehensive Plan Update is now available on-line at [www.harpswell.maine.gov](http://www.harpswell.maine.gov), and at the Town Office. The February 22 Public Hearing will be an opportunity for members of the public to make comments for the Committee's consideration. If changes to the Plan are made subsequent to the Public Hearing, a second public hearing prior to Town meeting will be necessary. The Annual Town Meeting will be on March 12.

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan Update has been prepared by fellow citizens of Harpswell, your neighbors. They hope that their work will help prepare Harpswell for the inevitable changes of the next decade. The plan is based upon their research, their many consultations with you, and the advice of experts. Public participation has been welcome and invited throughout the planning process as evidenced by the nearly 100 public meetings, forums, and seminars. Other public outreach efforts have included use of the Town's web site, updates in the Town Bulletin and local newspapers, and Harpswell Community TV station.

In broad terms the Plan outlines the form and features of the face of Harpswell. It discusses how the face of Harpswell is changing, the challenges and opportunities the change presents to the Town, and how to manage change for the benefit of residents and the environment. The proposals in the Comprehensive Plan Update seek to balance the public good with the desires of individual property owners.

Any summary of a comprehensive plan over 100 pages long, containing over 150 recommendations relating to the future of Harpswell can only present an overview of the Plan. This Bulletin covers the topics of the Plan in broad terms. The Committee encourages the public to obtain a copy of the Plan and to provide your comments.

The Plan is organized in two parts. Part I is the active piece of the Plan, highlighting background information, trends, and analysis that introduce and give context to the Goals, Policies and Action Recommendations. Part II augments Part I with inventory and statistical background information. The following summaries some of the key aspects of the Plan:

## **Community Character**

This broad topic covers social and physical characteristics of Harpswell, which best define the town. These include the town's fishing/farming heritage, its village settlement pattern, more recent settlement patterns, economic foundation, and visual appeal of its remaining rural areas. Impacts on these elements of community character result from location, amount, type and cost of new development. As new large homes replace historic working waterfront homes, the character of fishing communities is lost. As new homes are built in wooded rural areas, habitat is lost and rural quality diminished. As traditional shared access to the ocean is lost to new housing development, fishing and shell fishing opportunities are lost. Recommendations include modifications to land use ordinances to encourage most new development to be built around historic villages as centers of community life. By contrast, development should be directed away from rural areas. Preservation of working waterfronts, historic neighborhoods, and valuable natural resources is a priority.

## **Marine Environment**

Harpswell's identity stems from its connection to the sea. Marine resources vital to the health and future of the town include clean ocean water, unpolluted coastal marshes, shellfish beds, and wildlife habitat. The health of these resources is determined by the amount, location and quality control of new development. Factors such as faulty septic systems, pesticides and fertilizers, and overboard discharges of untreated sewage degrade marine resources. To achieve the goal of a high quality marine ecosystem, the Plan outlines ordinances and actions that control pollution, promotes regional cooperation and encourages ongoing educational efforts.

## **Groundwater Resources**

Perhaps the single natural resource on which residents most depend is clean groundwater, used for human consumption. The town has no public water supply or distribution system, so bedrock wells provide most groundwater supply. A recent study of the town's groundwater details extensive information and data about the condition of this resource, noting 29 areas with existing and potential degradation, largely due to overly dense, older residential development. To protect the safety and adequacy of the town's groundwater, policies and actions suggest education, conservation, further research, and land use standards for future development.

## **Natural Habitat**

Harpswell's landform, consisting of islands and peninsula circumscribed by 216 miles of oceanfront, creates a rich and diverse marine-forest environment. Since most of the inland, forested landscape is no more than half a mile from the ocean, alteration of this landscape also alters habitat. Freshwater and coastal wetlands, of principal concern, support wildlife species on which we depend for much of our livelihoods and quality of life. Development jeopardizes habitat with intrusion and pollution. Preservation of habitat to maintain current diversity and health of wildlife will result from Plan proposals to accommodate new development, while balancing the value of habitat. To assist in systematic planning for habitat conservation, the Plan recommends that Harpswell develop a town-wide open space plan.

## **Housing**

In the past ten years about 500 new homes have been built, but the town's population increased by only 227 residents from 1990-2000. Because of Harpswell's extensive and desirable shoreline for residential development, the prices of land and new homes have risen rapidly. Although this phenomenon adds to the town's tax base and restrains the mill rate, higher assessed values adversely affect some long-time

residents, seniors on fixed incomes, and young families. The eventual result of a lack of affordable housing is a loss of Harpswell's population diversity. In order to provide a full range of housing opportunities for town residents, the Plan encourages determining the extent of need and developing strategies to meet those needs. These strategies include education about the issue, researching funding sources, and joint public/private efforts to develop affordable housing. To promote a broader range of housing types, zoning regulations should be made more flexible.

### **Marine Economy**

Fishing has been the mainstay of the local economy for generations. Many fishing families still reside in town after five or six generations. Research indicates that 50-60% of local jobs are fishing-related. The value of the landed catch in Harpswell varies with conditions and regulations, but is estimated at \$10 million annually. Some fishermen state they represent the last generation to continue fishing because of regulation, risk, development pressures and other options open to younger individuals. Pressures on the industry include loss of access to the ocean, increasing recreational use of waters, federal regulation, and closure of shellfish grounds due to pollution from development. To retain a sustainable marine economy, the town must limit conversion of working waterfronts to new residential uses, preserve access, manage lands abutting shellfish flats to reduce pollution, and diversify the marine economy by promoting nature-based tourism.

### **Public Services**

Public services are provided in Harpswell by a responsive town government and a multitude of volunteers that embody the best of community life. As the town grows, levels and cost of services increase. Substantive improvements in the past ten years include a new recycling center, expanded code enforcement, town administrator, town planner, expanded town offices, acquisition of Mitchell Field and land around the town offices, a recreation director and new ball field. Policies to improve public services in administration, improve town landings, codes enforcement, waste disposal, recreation, fire, rescue, police, transportation system, libraries, and schools are included. Plans for Mitchell Field are outlined, and the fiscal capacity of the town to provide adequate facilities to meet future needs is discussed.

### **Future Land Use Plan**

Comprehensive plans are required by the state to include a description of where and how to accommodate future growth. This chapter identifies areas in town suitable for new development in the next ten years, and those areas better maintained for their natural functions as wetlands, coastal marshes, and wildlife habitat. Strategies to manage growth include incentives and modifications to land use ordinances that accommodate growth where desired. These strategies include recommendations for intensity and type of land uses. The goals of the Comprehensive Plan are accomplished with the principles and mechanisms of the Future Land Use Plan. It, along with the balance of the Comprehensive Plan, becomes the foundation for future growth management and land use ordinances.

### **More Information**

For more information please contact the Planning Department in the Town Office by phone, (207) 833-5771, or e-mail, [jchace@town.harpswell.me.us](mailto:jchace@town.harpswell.me.us). Copies of the Plan are available on the internet at [www.harpswell.maine.gov](http://www.harpswell.maine.gov).

## **Recreation Update:**

**Adult Lap and Family Swim** will resume from 4:30 to 5:30 PM at the Bowdoin Pool. \$5 per child (parents free) or \$5 per adult. Jan 30, Feb 6, 13, March 13, April 3, 10. Registration accepted at the pool. Don't miss the Finding Nemo Event on March 13. Prizes for all the kids.

**Developmental Basketball** for K,1,2 begins at Harpswell Island School and West Harpswell School on Wed. Feb 16 and Thurs. Feb 17 respectively. The program is free but pre-registration is required by 2/10.

**New Movement and Music** classes for ages 1-3, 2.5-4.5 and 4-6 will begin on January 27 and April 7. The classes are taught at Bowdoin College by Harpswell's own music educator Tammis Lareau. Prices \$48 to \$56.

**Adult Pick-Up Basketball** continues every Wednesday from 6-8PM at the Harpswell Island School. Cost \$1.

### **The following programs are in the planning stages:**

Indian Cooking Class with John Marley - Spring

Pastel Workshops with visiting Russian Master

Pastelist Serguei Oussik - July

Creating A Wellness Lifestyle, Dr. Jeff Slocum,

Feb. 17, 11:45-1, free lunch, Town Office

Spring Make-Up Make- Over, April 16, 2-4 PM

Miranda Biannigan, Town Office

Digital Photography Workshops with David Higgins, Spring and Summer

Baseball/Softball- March - June

Harpswell Harriers – Cross Country – April- June

T-Ball – April 30 – June 11

Kayaking – June 27-July 1

Camp Harpswell – June 20-24

Summer Swim – June 20 – July 1

Music and Movement – August

**Registration:** Pre-registration is required for all activities except swimming, which can be done at the pool.

Flyers for all programs will be available on the town web site or at the town office as they become available.

**Contact:** Liz Bouve at 833-5771, e-mail [harpswellrec@zwi.net](mailto:harpswellrec@zwi.net). Town Web site: [www.harpswell.maine.gov](http://www.harpswell.maine.gov)

**Monthly Update:** To receive monthly updates by e-mail go to the town web site, listed above, to sign up.

**Calendar:** Check the calendar on the web site under the recreation department for a listing of all activities.

**24 Hour Mail Drop:** There is a locked mail box on the porch of the town office for registration drop off.